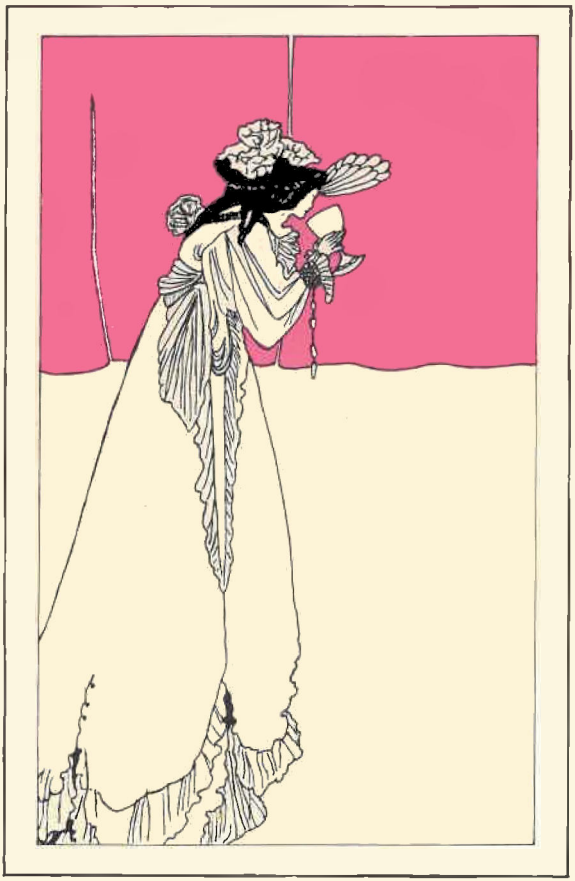
EL AMOR EN LA LITERATURA DE HABLA INGLESA

(SYMPOSIUM)



SERVICIO DE PUBLICACIONES DE LA
UNIVERSIDAD DE CADIZ

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1984

ISBN nº. 84-600-3741-X
Depósito Legal: Cá-543-84
Impreso en los Talleres de UNIMED
C/ Zaragoza, 6
C A D I Z

SUMARIO

INTRODUCCION

En el mes de Enero de 1984, durante los días 25 al 27, se celebró en esta Universidad de Cádiz, organizado por el Departamento de inglés, un Simposio-Seminario sobre el tema «El amor en la literatura de habla inglesa». En un principio pensamos haber celebrado el Simposio en Mayo y, por analogía (amor/primavera) fue por lo que decidimos el tema. Pero algunos colegas nos hicieron ver que había analogía (primavera/exámenes) que aconsejaba un cambio de fecha. Cuando la cambiamos, ya nos habíamos encariñado con el tema y lo mantuvimos.

De todas maneras, como nuestro Departamento es muy joven y no teníamos experiencia en estas lides, pensamos que corríamos el riesgo de encontrarnos con comunicaciones almibaradas o demasiado parecidas entre sí, así es que nosotros fuimos los primeros sorprendidos cuando vimos lo mucho que el amor da de sí como tema: las comunicaciones son seis, y no pueden ser más diferentes una de otras.

María Dolores Castro Mansilla nos presenta un amor conyugal y picaresco, con el toque avanzadamente feminista de esa

curiosa criatura que es Alison, the Wife of Bath.

Antonio Bravo, escarbando en el tiempo, nos transporta a una época legendaria, donde su tenacidad investigadora ha descubierto, entre el choque de las espadas y los escudos, un bello poema de amor donde se pensaba que sólo se cantaba a la guerra.

Claire Tylee pone la chispa alegre y un tanto cínica de un Oscar Wilde seguro de sí mismo, triunfante y feliz, en ese extraño asunto de ser formal.

María García-Doncel se abre paso entre las crinólidas y los encajes de «Emma» para dejar al descubierto la cruel realidad de una alternativa: ¿amor, o matrimonio?

Chris Rollason, estudioso y buen conocedor de Poe, roza los límites del mundo del terror en su trabajo psicoanalítico donde el sexo, la muerte, y la vuelta desde el más allá, hacen que el amor sólo se vea en transparencia.

Justine Tally aborda valientemente un tema de gran actualidad y enorme dureza: ¿puede existir el amor entre diferentes razas? Y llega, a través de interesantísimas exposiciones, a la conclusión de que, fuera del mundo del arte, el amor interracial sigue siendo socialmente una utopía.

Nos consideramos muy afortunados por haber podido reunir, sin méritos por nuestra parte, a estos magníficos profesores en nuestro Simposio, y agradecemos al Departamento de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Cádiz la oportunidad que nos ha dado, con la publicación de estas comunicaciones, de conservar tan valioso testimonio.

Marisol Dorao.

THE WIFE OF BATH WITHIN THE SO-CALLED MARRIAGE DEBATE

MARIA DOLORES CASTRO MANSILLA
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One group of **The Canterbury Tales** has traditionally been regarded as forming part of a Marriage Debate: «The Wife of Bath's Tale», «The Clerk's Tale», «The Merchant's Tale» and «The Franklin's Tale», after the study by G.L. Kittredge «Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage» (published in Modern Philology en 1912) and later works by the same author. Neither «The Knight's Tale» nor The Parson's have been considered relevant to this debate, the former being a chivalry and **almost**, of courtly love wich, after rather too much ado ends up where the others begin: marriage. I propose here that «The Parson's Table» be taken into account as he is like a counterpoint to the rest of the story-tellers, and particularly to the Wife of Bath.

Within these four Tales and their correspondent preambles, we see four different aspects of the same theme:

– The Wife of Bath's deals with the «soveraneitee» of wives.

– The Clerk's with the total dominion and tyranny of husbands.

– The Merchant's with the born-with-men ideas of wives' adultery and

– The Franklin's is an Exemplum of love and harmony within matrimony, where neither partner exerts dominion, the ideal solution «that does Chaucer infinite credit»[1], even more when it is contrasted to that of the Parson's Chaucer's final touch of

(1) G.L. Kittredge «Chaucer's Discussion of Marriage». The MacMillam Press LTD. ed. J.J. Anderson, 1974.

irony?

The debate Chaucer initiates in «The Wife of Bath's Prologue», is based mainly on four points:

1) «monogamy or octogamy»
2) virginity and chastity
3) infidelity
4) «soveraneitee».

I do not mean these are the only points she touches on, or that they are all equally important, but that they are directly or indirectly related to the marriage question.

In the first place, she appeals to Christ to show the legality of marriage, a point which nobody disputes, but she wants to go further, and at the same time demonstrate that there is nothing wrong according to Christ, in marrying more than twice:

«But of no nombre mencioun made he,
Of bigamye or of octogamye;
Why sholde men speke of it vileinye?» (32-34)

with which argumentation we feel perfectly happy. She has summarized in three lines the debate of her time about whether one should marry once or «eight» times.

But, as we will see later, she is not the last one to talk on this subject, the Parson will say:

«O man sholde have but o womman, and
O womman but o man, as seith Seint Augustin».

At this moment the question arises: did he mean at the same time or one after the other? If it is one by one there is no contradiction, even thougth it were in a life. But, in any case, who does the Parson cite? Saint Augustine. The defeat is clear, Alison was talking about Christ.

She continues by asserting that she would welcome a sixth husband, and immediatly she quotes Saint Paul, who advises bachelors and widows:

«To wedde, a godd's half, wher it liketh me.
He saith that to be wedded is no sinne;

Bet is to be wedded than to brinne.» (50-52)

So, we see again that the «high authorities» are on her side.

Her second subject virginity-chastity, I consider extremely important, not only to the marriage discussion itself, but to reinforce Alison's opinions, and to the general context of when and where «**The Canterbury Tales**» took place. Our Wife affirms she can understand those who want to be chaste, does she really? or, is it a way of appeasing the purest and «puritanical» minds? –and she openly says that this is not **her** case; she is made of «barly» and enjoys being payed with «his sely instrument» though it be a venial sin, which she could easily confess–. Whom does she scandalize? nobody but the frustrated, homosexual Pardoner, who, no doubt, would be willing to be well paid with the same instrument, and who hypocritically comments on his desire to be married, and encourages her to go on under the excuse of

«Teche us yonge men of youre praktike».

wich may mean «how interesting! for the first time in my life, I'm going to hear about what I would like to practice frequently» –Yet, he is wrong because Alison, though it might seem so, is not going to give us her sexual life in detail.

This theme of chastity is also important at another level. Up to the seventh century, priests were allowed to marry; it was from that century on that they were advised not to do so. It took almost five centuries for the Church to attain this purpose, with the results we all know, and that our Friar exemplifies. If the germ of Lollardry had already been planted in Britain, I suppose, or rather apprehend in **The Canterbury Tales,** one of the points was «Why do not all these men get married and leave fornication». Maybe, I am going too far and it was only Chaucer's implicit opinion. Because as our good wife would put it «Why have men tried to go beyond God's command? He never said His apostles had to be celibate». I can imagine whith her a young «clerk» in his room burning in desire for a woman and reading all the bad exempla –as her clerk did– to calm his

appetite, and if he could not resist and was properly fed, blaming those tempting devils for their infernal snares, that is to say, for being the object of his desire.

Less important to the Debate, but nevertheless illustrative for married women, are all those female tricks Alison describes, and which, in my opinion, are the result of a kind of sixth sense women have developed, like other animals, to defend themselves from the «enemy», and for wich I make men directly responsible. I am sure Alison would agree with «if you can't win by force, use your wits», which is unquestionably the basest of devices. Women have always been constrained not to reveal themselves as they really are especially before their lords. Here is the greatest of contradictions, for they had to spend their lives together for the better or for the worse, for richer or for poorer, for happiness or in woe, in sickness or in health, so there is nothing odd in the fact that they had their friends for gossiping and showing their true selves at least for a while.

Thirdly, she comes to an essential theme: infidelity

«Sire olde fool, what eyleth thee to spyën?
Thogh thou preye Argus, with his hundred yën,
To be my warde-cors, as he can best,
In feith, he shal nat kepe me but me lest;
Yet coude I make his berd, so moot I thee.» (357-361)

Which we see not only in the Miller's, the Shipman's and the Merchant's Tales, but as a universal topic in world literature. She, who is so exuberant, touches this theme slightly only to affirm that, there would be no eyes or keys in the world to prevent her from being adulterous if she wanted to be. There is also at this point a small hint at her having a good time «out by nighte» under cover of spying on her husband's hypothetical wenches.

But, if the Wife of Bath is so concise on this matter, the Merchant will not be so. He, frustrated, after two moths of marriage! will tell a story where as usual, the one to blame is the adulterous wife. He, also as usual, is painting the lion. One is

inclined to think that though January is so grotesquely portrayed, everybody «in the company» identified with the sufferings of his having a nicely decorated head, but, who pitied poor Alison?. Her fourth husband had his mistress too, and I suppose, everybody applauded him.

The worst of all is that adultery is not only a fictional topic; it has always existed in real life too. The image of an adulterous woman was ever welcomed and a ready butt for satire. Had the writing been done by women, could they have written down all men's infidelities? I would have been an endless work, because for an adulterous woman how many adulterous men are there?

Of the many discriminations between woman and man I think, it is on this ground, sex, where we find the greatest, based on what? If we look at it from a religious point of view, it is a sin for both sides; if from a moral one, it is immoral for both too, but, as to freedom, why cannot a woman choose to go to bed with whom she desires? Why would she be either a nymphomaniac or a whore? That is the world devised by men, who, while they were having a good time making war and love, invented chastity belts.

Going back to our jolly good wife, she, at last, arrives at her late husband and her omnipresent theme: «soverainetee». Her married life has been like everybody else's: sometimes happy, sometimes sorrowful. She was «soveraine» in her first three marriages, but what was she «soveraine» of? When in her fifth marriage she got dominion over her husband, it was a long and well deserved job, which even cost her the loss of the hearing in one ear! But it lasted so briefly.

This lengthy preamble, where the Wife tells us her whole married life, is the longest prologue Chaucer allowed any of his pilgrims. And this maybe because he wanted his character to have life of her own in opposition to every other pilgrim, not only to make her stand alone and be blamed by her contemporaries or praised by the forthcoming generations, but also to demonstrate to her travelling companions –and

everybody else–how wrong they were to judge her only by the appearances of her loose and free talk, without having any other insight into her soul.

Now that she finally begins her tale –no matter how many speculations there are as to whether it was the tale Chaucer intended for her or not, it is, in fact, **her tale**–, one might expect her to tell a rude, saucy almost obscene tale, nevertheless, what do we hear? A beautiful fairy –tale, sweet as a kiss, and undulating as a green corn– field ruffled by a soft breeze, which now and then threatens to become a devastating fury.

It is a tale starting with a riddle posed by Arthur's Queen about what women most desire; a riddle that a proud, dissolute knight, fit for the gallows, is incapable of answering without the aid of a disgusting old witch, to whom he depairingly promises anything. When the time comes to keep his promise he is so reluctant that it is not without difficulty that the abhorrent woman, not only makes him appear as her true lover, but also as her obedient husband, before turning into a beautiful young girl willing to please him in every way.

As we have seen, the Wife herself gives the first answer to the question as to what women most desire: sovereignty. The key to the Queen's riddle «soverainetee», as well as for the young «gentleman» who, after learning the lesson the lowly, lothly, old woman has taught him, submits to her dominion, but, what does she want his submission for? Neither for her own pleasure nor for sadistic reasons as Walter does. Could it be otherwise? No, it is the lioness who has painted the picture.

The second answer comes from the indignant Clerk who feels personally outraged at the Wife's impudence and the dominion exerted by her upon one of his peers. And, though he says: «This story is not told to imitate Griselda's humility, for that would be beyond the capacity of human nature. It is told in order that man –«man»?– or woman in whatever condition of

life, may learn fortitude in adversity»[2] etc; I imagine Alison smiling ironically at his speech, laughing inwardly, and glancing around with a triunphant look in which could be read «Didn't I tell you those Clerks know nothing by experience and tell the most extraordinary and inconceivable things, learnt from books or from other priests like them? Can you imagine anything of the sort?» And then reexamining her fellow travellers looking for possible sixth husband and thinking «how unlucky have I been on this pilgrimage. Let's hope the next will bring better opportunities».

The «Merchant's Tale» continues the discussion of marriage without adding anything new. Before the wedding takes place, we hear several opinions about marriage being a good or bad state. As to the marriage between January and May, it is the commonplace theme of the man who has had his time with women, and when he gets old either he starts thinking of hell due to his fornication, or he wants a fresh girl to try to mend what the others have crippled, if it is amendable, if not, at least to keep him warm. However, there is a very interesting sentence from Proserpina's lips:

«I sette noght of al the vileinye,
That ye of wommen wryte, a boterflye» (2.303–4).

It is not an absurd theory that the Marriage Debate finishes with «The Franklin's Tale»; it is comforting to see how a couple can live happily as equals without the idea of domination on either side, how Chaucer has gone beyond courtly love, and how though good understanding and «gentilesse» even the most arduous problems can be solved to everybodyes satisfaction. However, in my opinion, the most important aspect of this Tale is its «atemporality», the message it conveys is as valid for the twentieth century as for the fourteenth century.

The Parson presents marriage as it has traditionally been

(2) G.L. Kittredge op. cit.

presented according to the Church:

«The flesshy union is an entente of engendrure of children to the service of God; for certes that is the cause final of matrimoyne».

with an innovation I have never heard of

«it changeth deedly synne into venial synne bitwixe hem that be wedded».

and to which Alison, evidently, does not pay much attention –another innovation on her side?– Then, he goes on saying men should love and respect their wives etc., until he comes to **dominion**. He conceals his strong antifeminism by saying women were not made from Adam's head, so that «She solde nat clayme to great lordshipe. For ther as the woman hath the maestrie she make much destray». That is to say, women are stupid. To soften then a little, he continues «also, certes God ne made nat woman of the foot of Adam» –as Griselda seemed to have been made– «For she sholde nat been holden to lowe; for she can nat paciently suffre». That is to say they are proud, stupid and stubborn animals. Here is where I would show him that «the experience of day by day oghte suffise» to demonstrate the contrary of what he is saying, of course. In fact, Alison has just evidenced how wrong he is in both aspects.

The question of how many husbands one should have is something I cannot quite see. In my opinion the Parson is refering to one at a time. And the Saint Augustine he refers to is Saint Augustine of Canterbury, who arrived in England when Wulfstan brought his **Sermo Lupi**. Now, if this sermon is a traditional one, could we not go back as far as two centuries to justify it?.

«For if a womman had mo men than oon, ...; and eek a womman ne mighte nat plese to many folk at ones. And also ther ne sholde nevere be pees ne reste amonges hem; for everich wolde axen his owne thing. And fother-over, no man ne sholde knowe his oune engendrure...».

Be as it may be the Parson's «teachings» seem so stale,

dogmatic and antifeminist, and insincere that compared with the fresh, lively and heartfelt Wife's experience one is undoubtly moved to put all ones sympathies on her side.

As we know Chaucer intended to finish **The Canterbury Tales** with the Parson, who does not tell a tale at all, but a sermon on the seven deadly sins-sins duly represented all through the book. It is very likely that Chaucer planned to let Church's voice be heard on the marriage matter too, as if retracting what had been told before, especially by the revolutionary Wife, who dared, O impudent! to speak openly of her «maistrerie» over her husbands and her mirth and joy of being able to enjoy the pleasures traditionally reserved for them, the masters. But, as we have seen, the Parson is not very fortunate because if those were the theories the Church stood for, she is revolting against them, guided by the logic of her instincts and desires in taking the best part of what she considers to be «the salt of life».

In conclusion, the significance of «The Wife of Bath's Tale» is basically the one that the personality of its teller imprints on it, personality expressed in terms of modernity, mainly at four levels:

1) Its feminist and personally felt point of view
2) The Wife's emancipation
3) Her revolutionary ideas about marriage
4) The frankness of her opinions.

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WULF Y EADWACER: ¿EL PRIMER POEMA DE AMOR DE LA LITERATURA INGLESA?

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El poema del antiguo inglés **Wulf y Eadwacer** se halla en el folio 100 b – 101 a del manuscrito denominado **Exeter Book**[1], que se encuentra en la biblioteca perteneciente a la catedral de Exeter, y aparece copiado entre el poema **Deor**, con el que tiene ciertas analogías formales, y una serie de enigmas anglosajones entre los que en algún tiempo fue identificado este poema de amor. De hecho, cuando fue editado por Thorpe en el **Codex Exoniensis**[2], se le consideró como el primero de los enigmas. Posteriormente H. Bradley apuntó ya en 1988 la posibilidad de que no se tratase de la primera de las adivinanzas, sino de un fragmento de un soliloquio dramático en el que una dama se lamentaba de la ausencia de su amante. Hoy día la crítica moderna considera que no se trata de un fragmento, sino de un poema de amor completo en sí mismo aunque falten algunos versos al principio y posiblemente al final del cantar.

Wulf y Eadwacer es ciertamente uno de los poemas lírico-elegíacos más enigmáticos de la literatura anglosajona, asimismo es el más original por su forma y contenido, y sin duda alguna el más apasionado y emotivo poema de amor escrito en antiguo inglés. Esta poesía constituye además un caso típico de

(1) The Anglo-Saxon Poetic Records. Vol. III. G. P. Krapp y E. K. Dobbie. N. York y Londres. 1931-54.
(2) Thorpe: Codex Exoniensis. pág. 380.

«Frauenlied» relativamente original, aunque no único, en la literatura medieval inglesa[3]. El argumento se basa en la expresión de los sentimientos de amor de una dama para con su amante Wulf a quien probablemente habría desterrado su marido Eadwacer.

Leodum is minum swylce him mon lac gife
Willath hy hine athecgan, gif he on threat cymeth.
Ungelic is us.
Wulf is on iege, ic on otherre.
Faest is thaet eglond, fenne biworpen.
Sindon waelreowe weras thaer on ige;
Willath hy hine athecgan, gif he on threat cymeth.
Ungelic is us.
Wulfes ic mines wid-lastum wenum dogode;
thonne hit waes rening weder ond ic reotogu saet,
thonne mec se beadu-cafa bogum bilegde,
waes me wyn to thon, waes me hwaethire eac lath.
Wulf, min Wulf, wena me thine
seoce gedydon, thine seld-cymas,
murnende mod, nales mete-liste.
Gehyrest thu, Eadwacer? uncerne earne hwelp
bireth Wulf to Wuda.
Thaet mon eathe tosliteth thaette naefre gesomnad waes,
uncer giedd geador.
Es para mi pueblo como si alguien les hubiera regalado un don.
¿Podrán socorrerle si él se sintiera en peligro'
No será así entre nosotros.
Wulf está en una isla, yo en otra.
Fortificada está aquella roca, de fangales rodeada.
¿Podrán socorrerle si él se sintiera en peligro?
No será así entre nosotros.
Yo esperaba por mi Wulf con el mismo deseo que el de los caminantes

(3) K. Malone: Studies in Old English Literature in Honour of Arthur Brodeur. Universidad de Oregón. 1963. págs. 106-111.

cuando lluvioso era el tiempo y me sentaba compungida.
Cuando el arrogante guerrero me estrechaba entre sus brazos
era un placer para mí, mas también era un dolor.
Wulf, mi Wulf, mis deseos por tí
me han hecho enfermar; es tu ausencia
y no el deseo de comida lo que hace gemir mi corazón.
¿Me oyes, tú, Eadwacer? A nuestro desgraciado cachorro
Wulf se lo llevará al bosque.
Se puede fácilmente separar lo que nunca estuvo unido,
nuestra propia canción.

Como se puede observar el poema es de difícil comprensión y la ausencia de algunos versos nos dificultan aún más una posible interpretación. El primer verso parece ser el último de una estancia o serie de versos que han desaparecido, su significado es oscuro y no sabemos a lo que se refiere el término **«giefe»** el don al que alude la dama. Es posible que **«giefe»** se refiera a Wulf, especialmente si tenemos en cuenta el hemistiquio del verso 3 **«ungelic is us»**, no será así entre nosotros, que nos indicaría que Wulf no puede ser aceptado en el país en el que vive la dama con su esposo. La dificultad de comprensión es aún mayor en los cuatro últimos versos, en especial el término **«hwelth»**, que aquí traducimos como cachorro; y tampoco se sabe a quien se alude con el demostrativo **«thaette»** del penúltimo verso. Todas las posibles interrogantes del poema, no obstante, no parecen alterar el significado último de esta poesía a la que consideramos un canto de amor de una joven princesa que lamenta la ausencia de su amante Wulf, desterrado en una isla por su marido Eadwacer.

Wulf y Eadwacer representa el nexo de la infrecuente expresión del amor humano en el antiguo inglés con el permanente carácter germánico de toda la literatura del período anglosajón. La expresión del amor en antiguo inglés sólo es cantado en los poemas el **Mensaje del Marido**, el **Lamente de la Esposa** y en unos versos denominados el **Episodio de la mujer frisona**, recogidos en uno de los enigmas del manuscrito **Exeter Book**;y también como es obvio en el poema que aquí comentamos. Las características que diferencian a **Wulf y**

Eadwacer del resto de los poemas de amor del antiguo inglés son su forma y estructura, y en su argumento basado en el triángulo amoroso: la esposa, el esposo y el amante. En cuanto a los rasgos que le caracterizan con respecto a la poesía amorosa de la literatura inglesa de períodos posteriores hemos de destacar la atmósfera épico-heroica, el tema del exilio y sus consecuencias: viaje por mar, naturaleza adversa y dolor físico y moral; en tercer lugar el sentimiento elegíaco y por último la forma y dicción poética.

El amor expresado por una mujer: El primer rasgo que se aprecia en **Wulf y Eadwacer** es que se trata del canto de amor puesto en boca de una dama, este hecho no es único en la literatura anglosajona pues también aparece en el **Lamento de la Esposa** e igualmente en los versos del enigma de la mujer frisona; en realidad sólo en el **Mensaje del Marido** es el hombre el que expresa sus sentimientos de amor para con una mujer. Pero lo que realmente extraña al lector de este poema es la presencia de un esposo y un amante en la vida de la protagonista; en el poema se canta no sólo el amor humano, hecho no usual en el mundo germánico-cristiano anglosajón, sino que además se canta a un amor prohibido y adúltero que tiene más analogías con el tipo de amor que se cantará en Inglaterra tras la conquista normanda y la influencia francesa, y la consiguiente expansión del amor cortés. Sin embargo el concepto de amor en la literatura anglosajona es muy distinto al concepto del amor cortés. Es sabido que es la experiencia emocional del hombre más que la de la mujer la que constituye el objeto del amor cortés y que en éste se expresa el amor que siente el hombre por una mujer hasta idealizar a la dama como un ser superior. Este artificial sistema de comportamiento del hombre denominado **«amour curtois»** por el gran estudioso francés Gaston París y analizado por numerosos críticos de la literatura medieval entre los que debemos mencionar al inglés Lewis[4] que lo definió en cuatro puntos: humildad del amante,

(4) C.S. Lewis: The Allegory of Love. Londres 1953.

la cortesía, la religión del amor y el adulterio, tiene muy poco en común con el amor que aparece en **Wulf y Eadwacer** Eadwacer. Es cierto que si seguimos el documentado análisis que hace el profesor M. Peláez en su libro **Nueva Visión del Amor Cortés**[5] sobre las cuatro características ya apuntadas de Lewis, observaremos que hay ciertos rasgos comunes entre el amor anglosajón y el amor cortés, como podría ser el carácter aristocrático, el amor prohibido y la ausencia del amante. Más ello no debería inducirnos a pensar que el concepto de amor expresado en la literatura anglosajona es una especie de amor cortés; ambos tienen un origen distinto, se desarrollan en culturas dispares, como seguidamente veremos, y finalmente el hecho de que el sentimiento del amor sea cantado por una mujer en la poesía anglosajona hace que el concepto de amor sea muy distinto al que tenemos en la cultura del **«amour curtois»**.

Atmósfera épico-heroica: Todos los poemas de amor de la literatura anglosajona están impregnados de un carácter épico-heroico. El profesor Wrenn refiriéndose a **Wulf y Eadwacer** nos dice que este poema es **«Clearly from the Germanic heroic age»**[6]. Este carácter épico-heroico no sólo se aprecia por el tema del exilio, el sentimiento elegíaco y la forma y dicción poética, sino también por la atmósfera de un mundo guerrero y primitivo. Las expresiones **«waelreowas weras»** crueles guerreros, o **«beadu-cafa»**, arrogante guerrero; nos informan de esta caractearística épica. Por otra parte, se podría pensar que Wulf está en el destierro por verse envuelto en una de aquellas bárbaras costumbres de cumplir venganza. No sabemos si Wulf huyó de la venganza de su señor, de los parientes de un hombre asesinado o de la venganza que su propia venganza habría generado o por cualquier otro motivo derivado del concepto de venganza germánica. Esta interpretación explicaría en parte el estribillo que se repite en la poesía: **¿Podrán socorrerle si él estuviera en peligro? No será así**

(5) J.M. Peláez: Nueva Visión del Amor Cortés. Oviedo 1980.
(6) C.L. Wrenn: A Study of English Literature. pág. 83-5. Londres 1967.

entre nosotros. Pero aunque no considerásemos esta interpretación, es evidente que **Wulf y Eadwacer** es un poema distinto a la poesía cortesana en la que se desarrolla el amor cortés; no se expresan sentimientos que sean un mero galanteo de corte, se expresan sentimientos que se desenvuelven en un mundo épico-guerrero y probablemente del período de las grandes migraciones de los pueblos germanos.

El amor y el exilio: el tema del amor siempre aparecerá unido al exilio en la literatura anglosajona, y de hecho los tres poemas de amor tienen en el exilio el origen y el núcleo del argumento. La separación de los amantes es motivado por el destierro en el **Mensaje del Marido** y en el **Lamento de la Esposa.**. En **Wulf y Eadwacer** no se nos dice que Wulf esté desterrado, pero tras la lectura del poema todo parece indicar que está sufriendo el exilio. En el verso 4 se nos dice «Wulf is on iege, ic on otherre», Wulf está en una isla, y yo en otra; evidentemente esto parece indicar que el amor de la dama estaba en el exilio y que incluso sufre encarcelamiento o algún tipo de reclusión en la isla custodiada por **«waelreowe weras», crueles guerreros;** el lugar de reclusión asimismo está **«fenne biworpen»**, rodeado de fangales.

El exilio en el mundo anglosajón implicaba a su vez el viaje por mar[7], una naturaleza adversa y el dolor físico y moral. En. En los poemas de amor el **Lamento de la Esposa** y el **Mensaje del Marido** son frecuentes las alusiones a los viajes por mar así como sus peligros y adversidades, y las descripciones que del viaje se hacen alcanzan un emocionante sentimiento lírico. En realidad, casi todos los poemas importantes del antiguo inglés presentan algún tipo de viaje por los gélidos mares del norte. En **Wulf y Eadwacer** el viaje por mar sólo se insinúa cuando se menciona hasta tres veces la isla en la que se encuentra el desterrado y ello implica que Wulf tuvo que hacer un viaje por el mar desde su patria.

La naturaleza adversa es otro rasgo común en toda la poesía

(7) T. Díaz: El Viaje como exilio en la poesía anglosajona. Tesis de licenciatura inédita. Oviedo 1976.

del antiguo inglés, tanto en la épica como en la lírica, y en muchos casos relacionada con el exilio. En el verso 10 de **Wulf y Eadwacer «Thonne hit waes renig weder»** es una clara alusión a los crudos inviernos nóricos. Asimismo hay una alusión a los **«wuda»** los impenetrables bosques, morada de monstruos y lobos. Es también muy significativa la expresión **«fenne biworpen», rodeado de ciénagas**, descripción frecuente en la literatura anglosajona.

El dolor físico y moral es otra de las consecuencias del exilio. Las penalidades y sufrimientos de los que sufren el exilio se pueden observar en algunos de los poemas elegíacos como el **Errante y el Marino;** en los poemas de amor se aprecia más el dolor moral y la aflicción del espíritu. En **Wulf y Eadwacer** es la dama la que nos cuenta sus sufrimientos por la ausencia de su amante y son numerosas las referencias que tenemos en la poesía de su aflicción. Las expresiones **«ic reotogu saet», me sentaba compungida; «waes me hwaethre eac lath», más también era un dolor; «wena me thine seoce gedydon, thine seld-cymas, murnende mod, nales mete liste», mis deseos por ti me han hecho enfermar; es tu ausencia y no el deseo de comida lo que hace gemir mi corazón;** nos informan del dolor moral que embarga a la mujer como consecuencia del exilio.

El amor y la elegía: Las últimas líneas que he presentado nos introduce en uno de los rasgos más característicos de toda la poesía anglosajona, el carácter elegíaco, la tendencia a la melacolía y a un fatalismo trágico. Así lo hace notar H. Sweet en **Sketch of the History of Anglo Saxon Poetry** cuando escribe: **«A marked feature of Anglo Saxon poetry is a tendency to melanchololy and pathos...joined to the heathen fatalism of the oldest poems, it produces a deep gloom»**[8]. El origen de este carácter elegíaco para autores como Heinzel podría ser cristiano **«may we not derive their most prominent poetic characteristics from christianity?** y el mismo responde afirmando que **«The idealizing poetry is intimately related to the essence of**

(8) H. Sweet: Sketch of the History of Anglo-Saxon Poetry en la obra de T Warton History of English Poetry. 1871. vol. II, pág. 6.

Christianity»[9]. Una opinión totalmente opuesta nos la ofrece F.B. Gummere[10], **que considera la posición de Heinzel como un ataque a la característica más genuina de la literatura anglosajona «the elegiac mood has been attributed by a German critic (Heinzel) not to a tendency in the race itself».** Otros muchos autores entre los que podemos citar a Sieper[11] y Wardale[12] se encuentran en posiciones intermedias y más conciliatorias[13]. Respecto a **Wulf** y **Eadwacer** creemos que se presenta una atmósfera elegíaca derivada no de una posible influencia cristiana, como sucede con la mayor parte de la poesía del antiguo inglés, sino de la misma naturaleza germana del poema. Aunque **Wulf y Eadwacer** fue copiado a principios del siglo X por algún monje, no hay un sólo término que nos induzca a pensar que se trate de una elegoría religiosa o que pueda ser interpretado desde una perspectiva cristiana. Hemos de aceptar que **Wulf y Eadwacer** presenta un sentimiento trágico de la vida eminentemente germánico y su carácter elegíaco tiene su origen en la misma raíz germánica de la concepción del mundo. A pesar de todos los elementos elegíacos que aparecen en este poema no podemos identificar a **Wulf y Eadwacer** con los poemas que se han denominado desde siempre como elegíacos tales como **Deor, El Errante, El Marino** y otros, pues el verdadero tema central de **Wulf y Eadwacer** es el amor y como poema de amor se ha de identificar[14].

Forma y dicción poética: En primer lugar, se ha de considerar que este poema ya está muy elaborado y un tanto

(9) Heinzel: Quellen und Forschungen zur Sprach und Culturgeschichte der germanischen Volker X. pág. 38.
(10) F. B. Gummere: Germanic Origins. 1892. pág. 331.
(11) E. Sieper: Die altenglische Elegic. 1915.
(12) E.E. Wardale: Chapters on Old English Literature. 1935.
(13) E.G. Stanley: Un análisis de las distintas interpretaciones sobre este punto puede verse en el libro: The Search for Anglo-Saxon Paganism. Cambridge. 1964.
(14) A. Bravo: Un estudio y traducción al castellano de estos poemas se encuentran en el libro: Literatura Anglosajona y Antología bilingue del antiguo inglés. Oviedo 1982.

alejado de la tradición oral germánica de la que sin duda alguna procede. **Wulf y Eadwacer** no es un cantar formado de estructuras orales, de fórmulas exclusivamente verbales, aunque el verso se basa en este tipo de forma épica. Hay que pensar que el bardo que finalmente compuso esta poesía elaboró un poema con una técnica más refinada y compleja aunque basado en la estructura tradicional del verso; es decir, versos formados de dos hemistiquios con dos acentos principales en cada uno, asimismo aparece una aliteración que viene determinada por el sonido sobre el que recae el tercer acento del verso, igualmente ha de haber al menos un sonido aliterativo en cada hemistiquio, así: **«Wúlf, min Wúlf / wéna me thine».**

Wulf y Eadwacer presenta no obstante algunos rasgos originales respecto al resto de la poesía del antiguo inglés. En primer lugar, aparece una especie de estribillo, rasgo éste que en antiguo inglés sólo aparece en **Deor.** Igualmente es de notar la presencia de versos incompletos formados por un solo hemistiquio; asimismo se aprecia una aliteración vocálica más frecuente que lo usual, así como el predominio de sólo dos sonidos aliterativos en el verso. Es también curioso el orden de palabras al principio de ciertos versos, especialmente por la tendencia a repetir algunas estructuras como: **«Leodum is», «Wulf is» «Faest is».** En cuanto a la lengua, los críticos piensan que se trata de un poema de origen anglo y que ciertas formas fonéticas y morfosintácticas así como semánticas nos inducen a pensar que ya existía esta composición poética en tiempos del rey Alfredo. Finalmente hemos de decir que la dicción épica y el estilo sobrio y germánico de **Wulf y Eadwacer** apenas presenta analogía alguna con la poesía del amor cortés.

Una vez analizadas las características más sobresalientes de **Wulf y Eadwacer** intentaremos responder a la pregunta de si este poema es la primera poesía de amor de la literatura inglesa. Es de suponer que una gran parte de la literatura del antiguo inglés ha desaparecido en el transcurso de los siglos y entre ella indudablemente poemas de amor. **Wulf y Eadwacer** fue uno de aquellos poemas recitados por los bardos en las plazas y salones de la nobleza en un período posterior a la llegada de las distintas tribus germánicas a Inglaterra. Es lógico suponer que junto a

este poema habría otros de la misma naturaleza y aunque nunca se sabrá qué poema fue el primero en el tiempo es evidente que **Wulf y Eadwacer** presenta aquellos rasgos distintivos de la más primitiva forma de expresar el amor humano entre los germanos asentados en Inglaterra.

Si comparamos **Wulf y Eadwacer** con los otros dos poemas de amor de la literatura anglosajona, el **Lamento de la Esposa** y el **Mensaje del Marido**, la crítica especializada ha observado que tanto por razones de lengua como estilísticas y semánticas es muy probable que **Wulf y Eadwacer** sea anterior. Pero la prueba tal vez más concluyente para considerar a este poema que comentamos como anterior a los dos citados anteriormente radica en que **Wulf y Eadwacer** no refleja influencia cristiana alguna. En el poema el **Mensaje del Marido** nos encontramos con un hemistiquio en el que se nos dice **«alwaldend God», Todopoderoso Dios**, que nos demuestra que el poema, al menos en su versión final, tiene una influencia cristiana. El **Lamento de la Esposa** no presenta ninguna alusión concreta de carácter religioso, pero los críticos siempre han estudiado este poema junto con el **Mensaje del Marido** y lo han relacionado también como una alegoría cristiana. Este hecho nos induce a pensar que estos poemas son posteriores a **Wulf y Eadwacer** y pertenecen a un período en el que se hacía sentir la influencia cristiana sobre la literatura del antiguo inglés; por el contrario, **Wulf y Eadwacer** parece reflejar sólo la forma de expresar el amor de aquellos primitivos anglos, jutos y sajones que dieron origen a la literatura inglesa.

¿Es **Wulf y Eadwacer** el primer poema de amor? Lo cierto es que el concepto de amor en él expresado es el primero de la literatura inglesa.

THE QUEER BUSINESS OF BEING EARNEST

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Oscar Wilde's play The Importance of Being Earnest was first performed on St Valentine's Day, 1895, and has been constantly on the stage ever since; so constantly that it has never necessary to speak of revival: its vivacity has never sagged. At the grand old age of eighty it could still lend life to Stoppard's **Travesties** without losing any of its own vitality in the transfusion. And it still goes marching on.

Yet although it is conceded to be «one of the two best comedies written since the time of Sheridan» [1] critics have seemed inclined to praise it faintly as a mere «technical tour de force»[2], concentrating on the brilliance of its wit, the perfection of its epigrams, or the excellence of its construction, but damning Wilde for the emotional immaturity they claim it displays: «Oscar Wilde remains emotionally an adolescent, afraid to be other than superficial»[3]. Even G.B. Shaw found

Unless otherwise indicated all quotation are taken from the Everyman edition: Oscar Wilde: **Plays, Prose writings and Poems** (Dent, 1930).

1) G. Sampson **The Concise Cambridge History of English Literature** 3rd ed. (B.U.P., 1972).

2) A.E. Rodway «The Last Phase» **Pelican Guide to English Literature Vol. 6**, (Penguin, 1960).

3) Op. cit.

that although it amused him, the play left him with a sense of having wasted his evening because it didn't **touch** him[4]. It is strange that it has not been felt equally necessary to set such standards for that other popular Victorian comedy, **Charley's Aunt;** yet placed beside that **The Importance of Being Earnest** clearly stands out as more than just a funny play. Neither literary critics nor literary historians have given any convincing account of Wilde's play that either explains its continued status or the nature of its humour.

I cannot believe that audiences continue to enjoy it simply because it has a clever plot and flashes of wit. On the contrary, the plot and the wit combine to structure a probing, provocative caricature of Victorian society. And certain characteristics of society remain constant enough to ensure that the play continues to provoke audiences to exasperated laughter. Wilde sustains a tension between the action of the play and the ideas the characters express that lightly, oh so lightly, demonstrates the doublemindedness of his society, which collusively kept the social fabric taut –«Appearances must be maintained»– and resolutely avoided what flickered at the edge of its field of vision, threatening to sear across the deceit. Wilde drives his characters into absurd extremes to keep the fabric stretched, while he neatly stubs it with paradoxes. I think it is that conflict which excites the audience to laughter, delighted but evasive laudghter. Just how far can Wilde go without exposing the indecent reality? Such sophisticated titillation is hardly shoolboyish.

Wilde himself claimed there was a philosophy behind this «exquisitely trivial, delicate bubble of fancy»: «that we should treat all the trivial things of life seriously and all the serious

4) G.B. Shaw in **The Saturday Review**, quoted in H. Pearson: **The Life of Oscar Wilde** (Methuen, 1946).

things of life with sincere and studied triviality»[5] –a formula that implies he was in earnest when he wrote it, however jokingly, but leaves us puzzled as to which are the trivial and which the serious things of life, and which things are merely **called** or treated as serious. Both the flippant Algernon and the intense Jack are caught up in this dilemma, finding they must at least nominally live up to the name they have adopted and really be called Ernest in order to marry the girls of their choice. Wilde, however, has not entitled the play as about the importance of the **name**, but of the virtue that the name implies. The final resounding paradox is that when Lady Bracknell twits her newfound nephew for displaying signs of triviality he claims on the contrary to have realised for the first time the vital Importance of Being Earnest, having just discovered he has actually been speaking «nothing but the truth» all his life in claiming to be called Ernest and to have a younger brother in London. Yet although one may tell the truth by chance, one cannot be sincere by chance. And in fact had he not invented the character Ernest, and had Algernon not impersonated it, Jack would never have discovered that he really was Ernest Moncrieff. The title is, of course, ironic. There is no vital importance to being either Ernest or earnest, provided one can pass for it. That is more than a clever pun, a felicitous coincidence, and while society continues hypocritical it will continue to laugh at its own humbug.

The humbug that Wilde traces concerns the true nature of relations between people. Victorian social humbug attempted to obscure power, particularly the power over others that stems from economic advantage, by spurious reference to «responsibility». Wilde's central joke is to turn the normal power relations topsy-turvy and the audience is reduced to

5) Interview with R. Ross in **St. James's Gazette** 18th January, 1895.

helpess laughter because, of course, to make clear why certain remarks and events are paradoxical would require an explanation of just those features of society that must not even be mentioned, let alone acknowledged. Thus the play begins with an exchange between Algernon and his manservant Lane, which leaves Algernon reflecting wryly, «Really if the lower orders don't set us a good example, what on earth is the use of them? They seem as a class to have no sense of moral responsibility. «With regard to Lane Algernon seems to be rather like a pampered pet-cat, but provided he continues to supply Lane with champagne of a first-rate brand Lane will continue to lie to save Algie's fade. That the pleasure of the upper-classes depends upon the subjection of the lower orders is an awareness Wilde alludes to twice more, when Lady Bracknell refers to «a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution» and more pointedly when she says «Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square». But this awareness is kept just out of focus.

It is precisely the efforts of Jack and Algie to evade the responsibility society imposes on them, the «serious» behaviour expected of them by women, that lead to their both having created a fictitious character and assuming the name of Ernest, thus giving rise to that traditional staple of English comedy: the case of mistaken identity upon which the plot revolves. Jack has invented a younger brother in order to escape up to town since the high moral tone he feels it is his duty to adopt with his ward can « hardly be said to conduce very much to either one's health or one's happiness». Algernon has invented an invaluable permanent invalid, Bunbury, to avoid the tedium of social engagements in town. Ever more sagacious than Jack, he claims that «a man who marries without knowing Bunbury has a very tedious time of it», and that even if Jack doesn't want to know a

Bunbury then his **wife** will since «in married life three is company and two is none». Nowhere in Wilde's world is humbug stronger then with regard to marriage and sexual relations, a topic also introduced in that prefatory exchange between Algie and Lane that prepares the audience for the tone of the play. Although the whole impetus of the play is towards the marriages of Jack and Algernon we are not presented with any actual marriages by which to picture their future bliss. Indeed the only married man who appears on stage is Lane who finds it so uninteresting that he never thinks of it. But the continual references to the married state do not lead the audience to agree that «it is a very pleasant state».

Men suffer as a result of their wives. They suffer from the indignity either of having their clean linen washed in public or of their wives being so transformed by the acquisition of a French maid that not only do their own husbands not recognise them but other people refuse to. Once they are dead their wives look twenty years younger. If they persistently remain single, men are accused of converting themselves into a permanent public temptation. But no married man is ever attractive, except to his wife. And often not even to her. Apparently a man cannot win. Despite the warnings, Jack is anxious to sacrifice his independence to Gwendoline, and Algie too is captivated by Cecily's ingenuousness. The young women do not have to insist on the proprieties of engagement and marriage: Jack automatically assumes that if he and Gwendoline are in love with each other, marriage will follow; Algernon, too, immediately proposes marriage once he has declared his love. Neither Cecily not Gwendoline is coyly reluctant to accept; they have already anticipated this «surprise». The young men find themselves acting a predetermined part –in the one case, the ardent lover down on his knees, in the other, the reformed roue rapidly repeating his declaration for Cecily to note down in her diary.

Thus do the young women, their ideas of life gleaned from

Mudie's three-volumed novels, tyrannically transform life back into fiction. Jack Worthing's original identity as Ernest Moncrieff was lost when he was replaced by «the manuscript of a three-volume novel of more than usually revolting sentimentality». Algernon's courtship has been pre-empted by what is «simply a very young girl's record of her own thoughts and impression and consequently meant for publication».

Both Jack and Algernon, attempting to be in earnest, sincerely to play the role plotted out for them, find that the girls of their choice are only interested in what they are **called,** not in what they **are**. (They will discover as they grow older that what they took for an age of ideals is an age of surfaces: the only solid qualities that last are in investments). They have all four accepted the myth of romantic love, the final degeneration of the Courtly love tradition (originally cultivated at the court of a woman, Eleanor of Aquitaine, be it remembered) into Victorian gentility. What Wilde never mentions, but gestures at obliquely with his paradoxical hints at adultery, divorce and bastards, is that crucial element which made sense of tragic passion but is now missing. Absurdly the effete Algernon with his permed hair and the Marechal Niel rose in his buttonhole, dictates to the writing Cecily: «I haved dared to love you wildly, passionately, devotedly, hopelessly». Politely ignoring «wildly» and «passionately» Cecily remarks thoughtfully» Hopelessly doesn't seem to make much sense, does it? «Wilde has taken the elements of the romantic tradition: young lovers, mistaken identity, parental opposition, and strained them to the point of absurdity. Troilus and Criseyde, Romeo and Juliet consummated their love, but the myth found marriage antagonistic to passion. Desire cannot be legislated to rise. Only the hopeful Wife of Bath could believe in the fairy-tale in which the enforced union of a rapist and an undesirable old hag could result in passionate happiness, ruled by politeness (gentlemanly behaviour). Chaucer displayed passionate love of one's wife to be not merely a sin but an absurdity. Genteel society

nevertheless demands marriage, if only on economic grounds, and had by the 1890's so purified sexual attraction, so rarified personal relations, as to refine the physical, the passionate, completely out of existence. The literary tradition had insisted on virgens pure as Miranda and Sophie Weston, producing heroines as ignorant as Amelia Sedley and Louisa Gradgrind. It had emasculated its heroes: Heathcliff and Mr Rochester were punished for their lawless masculinity. The Byronic hero could only be satisfied when blind or dead. To be Lockwood was the only safe option for a young man.

Respectable British society required its respectable young women to be virgins on their wedding night. Sensible Brithish literature did not pretend they always were; even Jane Austen was able to suggest that women also felt sexual attraction. English fiction produced Pamela Andrews and Clarissa, but it also produced Moll Flanders, Kate Hardcastle and Becky Sharp. However, honest common sense seems to have surrendered to the antimacassar of Victorian gentility which idolised not only the mystique of female virginity but masculine purity as well. Palemon and Arcite walked in the corridors of English Public Schools. Joseph Andrews ceased to be a joke.

Wilde was left with a romantic convention so debased from its courtly original that it apparently had nothing to do with physical desire at all. Not only were young women brought up to be extremely shortsighted, kept virginally innocent of the facts of life –but so were men. Gwendoline who has not been taught to call a spade a spade, can gladly say that she has never even seen a spade– nor any other tool for that matter, we might add. But it is not only the women who have been kept green. As Lady Bracknell says, concerning a young man who is contemplating marriage: «I do not aprove of anything that tampers with natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone». The insinuation of the apple and the Garden of Eden resonates subtly, an innuendo of sexual knowledge only for the initiate in the audience. The

extraordinary character of the single-sex education thought appropriate for young Victorian gentlemen was devotedly delineated for us by T. Hughes in **Tom Brown's Scholdays.** The passage where Tom meets Arthur's mother for the first time is typical of Victorian sentimentality:

This was Arthur's mother. Tall and slight and fair, with masses of golden hair drawn back from the broad white forehead, and the calm blue eye meeting his so deep and open –the eye he knew so well, for it was his friend's over again, and the lovely tender mouth that trembled while he looked. She stood there a woman of thirty-eight, old enoug to be his mother, and one whose face showed the lines which must be written on the faces of good men's wives and widows– but he thought he had never seen anything so beautiful. He couldn't help wondering if Arthur's sisters were like her.

...and there gave him her hand again, and again his eyes met that deep loving look, which was like a spell upon him. Her voice trembled slightly as she said, «Good night –you are one who knows what our Father has promised to the friend of the widow and the fatherless. May he deal with you as you have dealt with me and mine».

Tom was quite upset; he mumbled something about owing everything good in him to Geordie –looked in her face again, pressed her hand to his lips, and rushed downstairs to his study...

English schoolboys were not even offered the outdoor male comradeship[6] what A. Fiedler calls «covert homoeroticism» in **Love and Death in the American Novel**– that was imaginatively available to the American lad. English gentlemen married the Empire and could look forward to onanism in the solitary splendour of the Jungle. Leonard Woolf's autobiography,

6) T. Hughes: **Tom Brown's Schooldays** (1857) Part II, chapter 6.

wrritten in the more open 1860's reveals for us the facts behind Hughe's fiction[7]:

Sexually the passage to puberty was almost always for my generation a painful and unpleasant business; it certainly was in my case. The first time I ever had violent physical sexual sensations was as a very small boy when, in bed with a cold, I was reading a book called, I thing, *The Scottish Chieftains*. The sensations astonished me; they came upon me as I read the description of how one of the chieftains –can it have been Wallace?– dashed down a hill and flung himself– without impropriety, I am sure –upon a lady who was being carried in a litter. I was puzzled by the involuntary physical phenomenon; vaguely I thought it must be somehow or other connected whith the cold in muy head, but it is perhaps significant that, despite my innocence, I did not report the symptom either to my nurse or to my mother. The facts about copulation and the birth of children were explained to me, as I have said, by a small boy at my private school in the worst possible way and to some extent inaccurately – I was left in some doubt as to the sexual functions of the female navel– when I was twelve years old. I remained a virgin until the age of twenty five; the manner in which I lost my virginity in Jaffna, the Tamil town in the north of Ceylon, I will relate in a later chapter. In the thirteen years of chastity and youth which intervened my mind and body were continually harried and harassed, persecuted and plagued, sometimes one might even say tormented and tortured, by the nagging of sexual curiosity and desire. How dense the barbaric darkness was in which the Victorian middle-class boy and youth was left to drift sexually is shown by the fact that no relation or teacher, indeed no adult, ever mentioned the subject of sex to me. No information or advice on this devastating fever in one's blood and brain was ever given to me. Love and lust, like the functions of the bowels and bladder, were subjects which could not be discussed or even mentioned. The effect of this was, I believe, wholly bad, leading to an unhealthy obsesion and a buttoning up of mind and emotion.

(ref. 6)

7) L. Woolf: **Sowing** (Hogarth Press, London 1960) pp. 65-6

Unlike the American hero –Deerslayer, Ishmael or Huck Finn–The Brithish hero walked alone in the writings of kipling, Henty and A.A. Milne. His best friends tended to be animals... but even literary critics can judge when to stop.

Unable to mention certain subjects on the British stage, or at least to treat them realistically[8] Wilde has transposed the myth in which the innocent virgin is rescued from the dragom –the witch, the stepmother– by her knight in shining armour: Lady Davers and Lady Catherine de Bourgh have become Lady Bracknell, the gorgon from whom there is no escape for the innocent man either. The alternative to a life of «passionate celibacy» as exemplified by Chasuble is one of either the sublime marital indifference of Lane or the upstairs ill-health of Lord Bracknell, who is occasionally allowed downstairs to make up the number at dinner. Gwendoline has inherited her mother's ideas: «The home seems to me the proper sphere for the man. And certainly once a man begins to neglect his domestic duties he becomes painfully effeminate». She will probably grow even more like her in perfect unbearableness too. When Jack asks nervously: «You don't think there is any chance of Gwendoline becoming like her mother in about a hundred and fifty years, do you, Algy?», Algy gives the famous reply: «All women become like their mothers. That is their tragedy. No man does. That's his».

Fotunately natural impulses die hard and not all young men remained buttoned-up like Woolf. It may have been inconceivable to Lady Bracknell that Algy could be untruthful –«Impossible! He is an Oxonian»– but like Jack he is capable of

8) G.B Shaw wrote in his Preface to **Mre Warren's Profession** in 1902: «I have pointed out again and again that the influence of the theatre in England is growing so great that private conduct, religion, law, science, politics and morals are becoming more and more theatrical, whilst the theatre itself remains impervious to common sense, religion, science, politics, and morals.

being «a fearful liar». After all, «even men of the noblest possible moral character are extremely susceptible to the influence of the physical charms of others». Wilde's hugest joke is never to let on quite what it is, apart from drinking champagne of a first-rate brand, that Jack and Algernon **do** get up to while off Bunburying.(9). However, I think we can trust to Algernon's being in earnest when he states: «My duty as a gentleman has never interfered with my pleasures in the smallest degree».

(9) Even though Gwendoline offers Jack a ready-made excuse for his London trips she still has «the gravest doubts» that it was really only to see her. Such a reason hardly explains the necessity for a pseudonym. No account whatever is given of Algernon's other Bunburying, but perhaps we can believe that he has «been very bad in my own small way».

EL PAPEL DEL AMOR EN «EMMA»: ELEGIR ENTRE LO ELEGIBLE

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Puesto que **Emma** es una de las obras más conocidas de Jane Austen y ésta a su vez goza de una merecida reputación, parece innecesario hacer aquí cualquier tipo de presentación de la novela.

No obstante, conviene señalar que fue la última obra publicada en vida de la autora(1816), tan sólo un año antes de su muerte, por lo que se trata, en opinión de la mayoría de los críticos, de la máxima expresión de su madurez literaria. Algunos[1] consideran incluso que esta novela fue la última completamente acabada por Jane Austen, ya que **Persuasión**, de elaboración posterior, no pudo sufrir el concienzudo proceso de revisión que caracterizaba el trabajo de esta autora, a causa de su enfermedad y muerte.

El estudio del que se ha extractado esta comunicación se basa en la reimpresión de 1976 de la edición Penguin de 1966.

Como es bien sabido, el matrimonio constituye el tema central de **Emma** y en pro de su consecución se manifiestan los desvelos de los personajes, en particular de los femeninos. El objetivo de este trabajo es dilucidar el papel que juega el amor

1) Nos referimos a J.F. Burrows en su obra **Jane Austen's Emma**, Sydney University Press, 1968.

en la elección de marido.

Se puede adelantar, ya desde estas primeras líneas, que no es el amor el móvil exclusivo, ni siquiera el principal, que condiciona dicha elección, aunque desde luego, es un elemento con el que hay que contar. La propia Emma, en una conversación con Harriet Smith en la que le manifiesta su intención de no casarse nunca, expone, sin ninguna crítica, algunas de las razones que inducen a contraer matrimonio a las mujeres de su época, si bien sólo para afirmar que responden a necesidades que en ella no se dan:

> «I have none of the usual inducements of women to marry. Were I to fall in love, indeed, it would be a different thing! but I never have been in love; it is not my way, or my nature; and I do not think I ever shall. And, without love, I am sure I should be a fool to change such a situation as mine. Fortune I do not want; employment I do not want; consequence I do not want»[(2)].

Estas razones, dejando aparte el amor, del que nos ocuparemos más tarde, pueden resumirse en tres de sus propias palabras: Fortune, Consequence, Employment, cuyo sentido trataremos de desarrollar a continuación.

El primero de estos términos alude obviamente a los aspectos económicos implicados en la elección de marido. No hay que olvidar que el contexto social en que se desarrolla la acción de la novela es el que podríamos llamar, desde una perspectiva moderna, el de la burguesía media rural y que, en este contexto el matrimonio, hasta bien entrado el siglo XIX, ha constituido fundamentalmente un asunto de índole económica familiar, en el que la preservación y el incremento de la

2) Jane Austen, **Emma**, Penguin Books, 1976, página 109.

propiedad tienen la máxima consideración. El adjetivo «familiar» que hemos empleado, tiene aquí un doble significado: por un lado, implica que la valoración que corresponde a cualquier individuo, sea hombre o mujer, en el mercado matrimonial, no radica en sus características personales sino en la posición económica y social de su familia y, por otro, que la elección concreta del partenaire no es única ni primordialmente una decisión individual, sino familiar.

En este orden de cosas el matrimonio supone, para las jóvenes que no son herederas, la única posibilidad de acceder a medios de fortuna propios. Para Emma, que ya los tiene, esta razón no tiene suficiente peso. Sin embargo para Harriet Smith, de la que Emma se convierte en amiga y consejera, que no dispone de una situación económica desahogada, es el matrimonio el único medio viable para adquirirla. Emma tiene clara conciencia de ello y de ahí sus desvelos por encontrarle un marido que se la pueda proporcionar.

Comienza, por tanto, a buscar jóvenes en Highbury que sean adecuados para sus planes, fijándose en Mr. Elton. Tras su labor de promoción de la figura y cualidades del Sr. Elton, entre las que, por supuesto, se encuentra su segura posición económica, y de su esfuerzo diario por suscitar esperanzas en su ya propensa amiga, Emma consigue que Harriet se interese por él, olvidándose por el momento del granjero Robert Martin.

Pero en un entorno social tan agudamente consciente de la importancia del estatus, el cual está primordialmente basado en la propiedad, las normas que rigen estas uniones son necesariamente rígidas y, por tanto, en lo que al progreso económico se refiere, resulta difícil superar ciertos límites. Son numerosas las alusiones en las novelas de la época a la conveniencia de que los medios de fortuna de los contrayentes sean parejos. Por ello Mr. Knightley, que representa en todo momento la sensatez, el realismo, el respeto a las reglas sociales en suma, desaprueba los proyectos de Emma advirtiéndole de la desigualdad existente entre Harriet y su candidato. Esta

desigualdad es por supuesto económica pues como el propio Mr. Knightley comenta a Emma, Mr. Elton sabe, también como cualquiera, el valor que tiene una buena renta[3], pero es también de rango social. Esto nos lleva al segundo de los términos que señalábamos en un principio como motivaciones plausibles para el matrimonio: «consequence».

Desde luego el rango social está íntimamente vinculado con la propiedad, pero no puede identificarse sin más con ella y por ello Emma no lo hace. Para que la propiedad conlleve una posición social elevada es preciso que exista cierta tradición en su posesión. Y esta tradición, en la época que nos ocupa, está casi exclusivamente limitada a lo que hemos llamado burguesía rural, es decir, a los propietarios de tierra. De ahí que precisamente en este ámbito, la conciencia del propio nivel y la necesidad de mantenerlo y, si es posible, mejorarlo, sea un elemento muy importante en la elección del cónyuge.

El respeto a esta norma se nos presenta en la novela como una garantía de felicidad para los contrayentes y de satisfacción para sus familias. Y así lo siente Emma al recordar el matrimonio de su hermana Isabella con Mr. John Kinghtley:

> «....Isabella had connected herself unexceptionably. She had given them neither men, nor names, nor places, that could raise a blush»[4].

En cambio, su inobservancia se traduce en consecuencias indeseables, tal como ejemplifica el matrimonio de Mr. Weston y Miss Churchill. La desigualdad económica y social de la pareja es causa de vergüenza para la familia de ella, que se siente rebajada en su estatus, produce la ruptura con la transgresora y,

3) «He knows the value of a good income as well as anybody». **Emma** página 92.
4) **Emma**, página 353.

finalmente, es motivo de infelicidad para ambos. Tal es el castigo de una unión inadecuada:

> «It was an unsuitable connection, and did not produce much happiness»[5].

La tercera de las necesidades a que Emma alude como posible móvil matrimonial, es la ocupación: «employment». Esta es, quizás, la única de las que hasta ahora hemos analizado que reposa más en características personales que en la posición familiar, aún cuando aquellas estén condicionadas en buena medida por un sistema encaminado, casi en exclusiva, a posibilitar el adecuado desempeño del papel de esposa.

A esta presunta necesidad objeta Emma que está segura de que su espíritu activo le proporcionará suficientes recursos mentales para llenar provechosamente su tiempo, sin necesidad de casarse. Esta declaración de independencia personal, que posiblemente no nos sorprenda si la juzgamos con mentalidad del siglo XX, resulta sin embargo profundamente inusual en una mujer de su época. Así lo demuestran las palabras de Harriet:

> «Dear me! –it is so odd to hear a woman talk so![6].

Podemos aún citar una última motivación para el matrimonio, ésta de carácter negativo, que si bien no es mencionada por Emma en su exposición inicial, surge, de la sorprendida Harriet, en el transcurso de la conversación entre ambas. Se trata, naturalmente, de que la alternativa a la socialmente estimable condición de casada es, en la peor acepción de la palabra, la soltería. La consolidación de este

5) **Emma**, página 46.
6) **Emma**, página 109

estado, más allá de la edad en que su ruptura se ve como posible, convierte a la mujer que lo ostenta en un ser ignorado, desde el punto de vista social, cuando no despreciado. Además, por circunstancias económicas y sociales que ahora no viene al caso exponer, el porcentaje de solteras, sobre todo entre las clases acomodadas, se había venido incrementado de modo constante en Inglaterra desde el siglo XVII[7] y este hecho hacía más patente el sentimiento de temor que la soltería inspiraba.

Por eso las palabras de Emma, su decisión de permanecer soltera, suenan tan extrañas a los oídos de Harriet. Pero Emma sabe ver, debajo de la cáscara de la apariencia, cuál es la verdadera razón de la lamentable situación social de las solteras. Y su análisis es tan revelador que no necesita comentarios:

> «Never mind, Harriet, I shall not be a poor old maid; and it is poverty only which makes celibacy contemptible to a generous public. A single woman, with a very narrow income, must be a ridiculous, disagreeable, old maid! the proper sport of boys and girls; but a single woman, of good fortune, is always respectable, and may be as sensible and pleasant as anybody else»[8].

De nuevo, pues estamos ante factores económicos, que parecen omnipresentes cuando del matrimonio en **Emma** se

7) Lawrence Stone, The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800 Pelican Books, 1979.

8) **Emma**, página 109.
Esta parece ser también la opinión de la propia Jane Austen, quien, un año después de la publicación de **Emma**, escribía en una carta a su sobrina lo siguiente:
«Single women have a dreadful propensity for being poor –wich is one very strong argument in favour of Matrimony».
Carta fechada el 13 de Marzo de 1817, en **Jane Austen's Letters.**

trata.

Pero, entonces, podemos preguntarnos, ¿es que el amor no juega ningún papel en la elección de pareja? Tornemos a la tan mencionada exposición de motivos de Emma. Allí, tras negar para sí la vigencia de necesidades que en otras harían razonable la voluntad de contraer matrimonio, Emma hace sólo una salvedad en la firmeza de su decisión: «¡Si me enamorara, desde luego, sería diferente!», para añadir inmediatamente, «pero nunca he estado enamorada; no es mi estilo, o mi naturaleza; y pienso que nunca lo será».

Hay en esta cita dos connotaciones que resultan interesantes de destacar. La primera es que el amor no parece estar incluido entre los motivos usuales que inducen al matrimonio a las jóvenes de la época, sino que su posible capacidad motivadora semeja quedar relegada al ámbito personal de la protagonista que, libre de las otras necesidades que reclaman atención en primer término, puede prestarla a sus inclinaciones y sentimientos.

La segunda es una valoración ambigua del amor. Si por una parte parece reconocérsele entidad suficiente para poner en peligro su decisión, como antes señalábamos, por otra el amor parece ser sólo propio de determinadas naturalezas y, desde luego no de la suya. Y ¿cuál es, en la opinión de sí misma y de los que la rodean, la naturaleza de Emma? Si algo resulta obvio es la importancia que nuestra heroína atribuye a la racionalidad, al equilibrio, al buen juicio. Es cierto que, a veces, su afición casamentera, su propensión a forjar planes para sus amistades, estimulada como ella misma dice por su éxito inicial con la señorita Taylor, la aboca a actuaciones poco sensatas que merecen la reprobación de Mr. Knightley, pero ello no desvirtúa su aspiración a un «espíritu bien equilibrado». Así pues, habremos forzosamente de deducir que Emma está estableciendo una cierta incompatibilidad entre racionalidad y amor, en claro detrimento del segundo. Esta oposición no puede

sorprendernos si la vemos como una reminiscencia, todavía vigente, de las premisas morales de épocas anteriores, en las que el amor, como fundamento del matrimonio, era severamente condenado por su carácter efímero e irracional. Y tampoco ha de sorprendernos el carácter ambiguo de la valoración global que del amor hace Emma, si tenemos en cuenta que su momento histórico corresponde a una época de tránsito en lo que respecta a las actitudes sociales hacia los sentimientos. Como señala M. Strimpel, de la misma forma que el racionalismo del siglo XVIII y el romanticismo naciente del XIX están en conflicto en otros frentes, también el ideal del matrimonio por amor, más bien que por intereses económicos, está en un estadio de transición.

Y a un período de transición, entre lo viejo y lo nuevo, le van bien las soluciones de compromiso. A una de ellas se apunta Jane Austen, según se desprende de su tratamiento del amor en **Emma**. Así, sus personajes son libres para elegir pareja en función de sus propios afectos e inclinaciones personales, pero sólo dentro del grupo de candidatos que reúne los requisitos económicos y sociales que las reglas exigen. Se nos esclarece de este modo el papel del amor, que no es otro que el de permitir elegir entre lo que es socialmente elegible.

Consecuentemente con esta posición, la libertad de elección se manifiesta sobre todo de un modo negativo, es decir, en el rechazo de pretendientes adecuados, desde un punto de vista social, pero no amados.

Podemos terminar con una frase que Mathilde Strimpel dedica a Jane Austen al tratar del tema del amor en el matrimonio:

«...it might be said that she held it wrong to marry

without love, but unrealistic to marry for love alone»[9].

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ON SEXUAL RELATIONS IN POE'S «BERENICE» AND «MORELLA»

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«Dans les Nouvelles de Poe, il n'y a jamais d'amour», claimed Baudelaire in 1856[1]. Nonetheless, many of the tales of Edgar Allan Poe (US, 1809-49) signify sexual/emotional relations between men and women. At the same time, any reader must agree with Cortázar (1956) that the texts are marked violently by «la falta de una sexualidad normal»; and that «la pasión amorosa... asume los rasgos propios del sádico, el masoquista y el necrófilo, escamotea todo proceso natural y lo sustituye por una pasión que el héroe **es el primero en no saber como calificar**»[2].

If Poe's fiction signifies the psychopathology of sexuality, this should be seen as an instance of a general tendency in his work, towards **signification of the extreme**; above all, of psychological extremes. For Valery, Poe was «le psychologue de l'exception»[3]; for Baudelaire, «l'ecrivain des nerfs», who narrated «les **exceptions** de la vie humaine»[4]. Over the C20, such hints as to the psychological emphasis in Poe's writing have been developed into a whole tradition of reading the texts

1) Baudelaire, p. 166.
2) Cortazar, p. 46.
3) Valery, p. 599.
4) Baudelaire, p. 171.

from a broadly psychoanalytic viewpoint; this tradition opposes itself to mystical or supernaturalist readings of the tales. Its first major instance is Marie Bonaparte's massive «Edgar Poe: étude psychanalytique» (1933); Eng. trans. 1949), wich applies classical Freudian analysis to Poe's life and works[5]. The volume has a brief preface by Freud in which the founder of psychoanalysis acclaims Poe as a «great writer»[6]. More recently, important studies by Helene Cixous (1972)[7] and Barbara Lanati (1978)[8] have attempted to read the texts in terms of sex-role problematics and schizophrenia respectively. Within the broad framework of this tradition, I wish to analyse, rather than well-known texts such as «Ligeia» or «Usher»[9], two lesser-known tales on the theme of sexual relations, «Berenice» and «Morella».

Some theoretical considerations will be useful first. Franco Moretti, in a recent study of terror fiction, 1978 observes that «much of nineteenth century bourgeois high culture (treats). Eros and sex as **ambivalent** phenomena», in texts in which «fear and desire incessantly overturn into one another»[10]. Moretti's examples include Poe's «Ligeia» (1838); in which, indeed, the male narrator is «at once... delighted and appalled» by his wife's eyes[11]; one could add Hawthorne's «Rappaccini's Daughter» (1844), in which the «belle empoisonneuse» Beatrice is viewed by the male protagonist with simultaneous «love and horror»[12].

5) See Bibliography.
6) Bonaparte, p. xi.
7) See Bibliography.
8) Idem.
9) I have written on «Ligeia» in «Ideologia da Vontade, Sexualidade e Forças Produtivas em Poe e Balzac», «Revista Crítica de Ciencias Sociais» (Coimbra), No 4/5, Oct. 1980, pp. 215-242.
10) Moretti, p. 79.
11) Mabbott II, p. 315. «The Celestial Railroad, etc».
12) Hawthorne; pp. 222, 233. See Crews, pp. 117-135, for a reading of this text in terms of fear of female sexuality.

It must further be asked, however: what are the possible cultural reasons for the presence of such ambivalence over sexuality in C19 literature?

Freud's final views on female sexuality may provide illumination. His final position (much modified from earlier views) is expressed in the 1931 essay «Female Sexuality»[13], and has been reinterpreted from a materialist perspective by Juliet Mitchell in «Psychoanalysis and Feminism» (1974)[14]. According to Freud, «normal» female sexuality divides into two phases: the first, **pre-Oedipal** phase, up to age 4, is primarily **active,** with the **mother** as love-object; the second, Oedipal phase is primarily **passive**, with the **father** as love-object. The traces of the active phase are, at least in Freud's culture, «typically» subjected to «an act of massive repression» (Mitchell)[15], but remain in the unconscious and can be reactivated. Female sexuality thus contains, in potential, **both** active and passive components –(as, indeed, does male sexuality in the Freudian model)[16]; although for cultural reasons, the passive component is generally dominant in the female subject's consciousness. Once ideology is winnowed off from science in Freud's writings, the above model can be re-presented as a **descriptive** model of what happens in patriarchal culture, and not a prescriptive recommendation[17]. At this point it can become useful for materialist analysis; if active sexuality is «normally» repressed in the socialisation of the female child, this process also provides the basis for the repression or devaluation of women's active characteristics in general, and

13) See Bibliography.
14) See Mitchell, esp. pp. 53-60, 109-132.
15) Mitchell, p. 112.
16) Bisexuality... is present... in the innate disposition of human beings» (Freud, 1931, p. 374).
17) Mitchell, esp. p. XV: «Psychoanalysis is not a recommendation **for** a patriarchal society, but an analysis **of** one».

hence for their insertion in society as passive subjects.

For a patriarchal culture, any emergence of active femaleness becomes immediately threatening. In the C19 US, for women to demand active participation in education and public life was to threaten the cultural division of roles between male activity and female passivity. Thus both the sexually and the intellectually active woman were typically seen as dangerous. In the literature of the period, both figures converge, in Poe's Ligeia, and in Hawthorne's Zenobia («The Blithedale Romance», 1852) –both of them fictional women presented as fascinating but destructive.

Feminist movements appeared in the US, in the general context of reform movements, from the 1830s. Hawthorne's Zenobia is a feminist writer and publicist[18], based on the historical Margaret Fuller (1810-50), writer of «Woman in the Nineteenth Century» (1845). Poe, as a typical product of the hyper-patriarchal South[19], was unequivocally hostile to feminism. In an article on Fuller (1846), he politely accepts her talent, but **isolates** her as a freak, an atypical woman: her book is seen as one which «no woman in the country would have published, with the exception of Miss Fuller»; and, further, attacks her for ignoring «the intention of the Deity as regards sexual differences»[20]. In a less guarded private letter, Poe refers to Fuller as «that detestable old maid»[21]. Nonetheless, in spite of his conscious anti-feminist position, Poe's fiction is haunted by the spectre of the active woman (active sexually and/or intellectually), whose existence undermines and terrifies the

18) See Hawthorne, «The Blithedale Romance», esp. pp. 95-6.

19) See Marchand, esp. pp. 35-7, for Poe's hostility to feminism. Poe was born in Boston but educated in Richmond and Charlottesville, Virginia.

20) Poe, «Sarah Margaret Fuller» («Godey's Lady's Book», Aug. 1846; Harrison XV, pp. 73-83), p. 74.

21) Harrison XVII, p. 333.

male protagonist.

I wish now to consider «Berenice» and «Morella», both published in 1835.[22]. The first tale presents an engagement between cousins; the second, marriage and childbirth; while both are shadowed by death. Both tales have male first-person narrator (the lovers of the respective women) who cannot be considered completely reliable, since both show developing tendencies towards schizophrenia[23].

In «Berenice», the narrator, dominated from the outset by his fantasies, becomes increasingly dissociated from the external world, finally entering a state of split consciousness in which he loses conscious control over his actions. His cousin and fiancee, Berenice, falls victim to a strange illness which transforms her entire person, and, specifically, her **teeth,** with whose image he becomes obsessed. Berenice apparently dies (in fact it is an epileptic fit) and is buried; the same night, her fiance breaks into the tomb, and without consciousness of his actions, extracts the teeth from the still living body. Only hours later is he able to reconstruct the sequence of his actions, confronted with the material evidence of: «some instruments of dental surgery, intermingled with thirty-two small, white and ivory-looking substances that were scattered to and fro about the floor».

Over the text, the narrator's attitude to Berenice undergoes various mutations. At first he sees her in terms of an idealist discourse of spirituality, attempting to desexualise her in the interests of domination; she appears as a «sylph», a «Naiad», indeed is disembodied altogether by being reduced to an «abstraction»: «In the silence of my library at night, she had flitted by my eyes, and I had seen her –not as the living and

22) References to «Berenice» are to Mabbott II, pp. 209; to «Morella», to the same volume, pp. 229-236.

23) See Lanati, esp. pp. 47-60, for the question of the progress of Poe's characters towards schizophrenia. «La rinuncia... al corpo, alla materia, alla fisicita, canduce per gradi allo stato schizofrenico della mente» (46).

breathing Berenice– but as the Berenice of a dream». He admits that «most surely I had never loved her»; instead of recognising her subjectivity as Other, he reduces her to even less than object status to an image in his dreams, and thus to a mere epiphenomenon of himself as subject.

But her illness forces him to recognise her physicality; the «fatal disease» makes him aware of «startling changes... in the **physical** frame of Berenice», and the lexis here indicates he now admits her body as concrete reality. But this transformed body produces **fear** in him, through the teeth «long narrow, and excessively white». In their «terrible development», they are clearly vampiric –but vampirism here is metaphoric, in the sense that the woman represents, at least in the narrator's imagination, an alien and threatening force[24].

This force is, almost certainly, that of active female sexuality, perceived as destructive by the male subject. The narrator becomes dominated by the teeth as their image assumes a hallucinatory autonomy: «But from the disordered chamber of my brain... would not be driven away the white and ghastly **spectrum** of the teeth... still the **phantasma** of the teeth maintained its terrible ascendancy, as, with the most vivid and hideous distinctness, it floated about... the chamber». The extreme fear produced in him by the teeth, and repeatedly signified in the lexis of terror («ghastly», «terrible», «hideous»), can be read as, ultimately, castration fear. Bonaparte relates the teeth to the castration complex, via the idea of the «vagina dentata» –the fantasy, often clinically verified, that the vagina is furnished with castrating teeth[25]. In her view, the fear signified in Poe's text is, ultimately, fear of the castrating mother; it may,

24) The concept of vampirism is a commonplace in Poe criticism. The relation of the vampire theme to the question of sexual politics is, however, less noted. In Bram Stoker's «Dracula» (1897), female vampires are explicitly presented as sexually deviant and dangerous.

25) Bonaparte, p. 218.

however, be read in more general cultural terms as corresponding to a fear of active and aggresive femaleness. The woman becomes endowed with «long, narrow» appendages capable of penetration and destruction.

The narrator reacts to his own fear of the teeth with the desire to **possess** them: «For (the teeth) I longed with a phrenzied desire... I felt that their possession could alone ever restore me to peace». To possess the teeth he has to **dispossess** Berenice of them; hence his nocturnal visit to the grave, which can be seen as a symbolic and violent restoration of the cultural «order» a reinstitution of the male-female power structure reversed in the image of the teeth. If Berenice acquires phallic power through teeth, then their extraction symbolically castrates her; the narrator's act of «dental surgery» destroys her sexuality, reducing her back to subordination[26]. Hence the extreme violence of the operation, which with its «violated grave», «disfigured body» and «garments clotted with gore», is a virtual rape.

And yet the woman, who has not previously assumed any active role outside the man's imagination, now makes her first and last active gesture. The violator discovers later that his hands are «indented with the impress of human nails»: to the act of male repossession of power, the woman reacts with a failed, but active, resistance.

In «Berenice», then, repressed fear of female sexuality comes to the surface in the narrator's near-schizophrenic mind. The fear remains **displaced,** however, on to an **image**, i.e. the teeth. In «Morella», there is a parallel displacement of fear, but this time on to an **idea** –that of the woman's.

The tale opens with the narrator's claim that his relation

26) Cf. Crews'reading of Hawthorne's «The Birthmark» (1843) (Crews, p. 126); the husband's removal of his wife's birthmark is seen as the destruction of her sexuality

with Morella was totally non-sexual: «With a feeling of deep yet most singular affection I regarded my friend Morella... my soul from our first meeting, burned with fires it had never before known; but the fires were not of Eros... I never spoke of passion, nor thought of love». Nonetheless, they marry; and the narrator's disclaimer, rather than being taken literally, may be read as indicating an unusual degree of repression[27]– a repression perhaps intensified by the unusual qualities of his partner as woman.

Morella is intellectually active: «Morella's erudition was profound... her powers of mind were gigantic». The couple study German philosophy together, and in these studies Morella acts as her husband's mentor, thus **dominating** him: «I abandoned myself implicitly to the guidance of my wife». The «knowledge» they study is described in terms of **prohibition:** «poring over forbidden pages, I felt a forbidden spirit enkindling within me»; while the husband becomes increasingly intimidated by Morella, by «the mystery of my wife's manner», and above all by her eyes: «I met the glance of her meaning eyes, and then my soul sickened and became giddy with the giddiness of one who gazes downward into some dreary and unfathomable abyss». In the end he comes to hate her and desire her death: «joy suddenly faded into horror... I longed with an earnest and consuming desire for the moment of Morella's decease».

Although sexuality is never directly signified, her husband's antagonism to her can be seen as originating in, precisely, fear of her sexuality as potentially active. Morella reverses role

27) Cf. Cortazar's remark, moted on p. 1 above, re. «una pasión que el héroe es el primero en no saber como calificar». See also Zanger, on the narrator of «Ligeia» and «Morella»: «They (i.e. the women) remain uncomfortably close to the sexual reality they are intended to suggest and disguise. Consequently their husbands must deny... all sinful intention towards them» (p. 537). Zanger suggests as a reading tool for these texts, the idea of the narrator «as self-deceiver or even as hypocrite» (ibid.).

stereotypes, more consciously than Berenice, by her intellectually active and dominant position[28]; it is worth recalling here Virginia Woolf's observation that intellectually active women were traditionally seen as sexually suspect: «It was the relic of the sense of chastity that dictated anonymity to women (writers) even... in the nineteenth century»[29]. Meanwhile, the «forbidden» knowledge into which Morella initiates her husband can be read, metaphorically, as sexual knowledge[30]; Freud associates the human desire for knowledge with the child's sexual curiosity[31], so that the narrator's reference to a «forbidden spirit enkindling within (him)» would give the lie to his previous disclaimers of sexual interest. Further, the «abyss» which he discovers in her «meaning» eyes may be identified with her threatening but indeed significative sexuality, whose «meaning» implies his own loss of «masculine» identity[32]; hence what he hates in this dominant woman is no less than her existence as active sexual being.

Morella dies, and her child is born in the same moment. The daughter is the «perfect resemblance» of her mother, and is at first loved by her father whit a pure affection». But she grows with precocious speed, and her growth produces «gloom, and horror, and grief» in him. He watches «her maturing form», and detects «the wisdom (and) the passions of maturity» in her «full and speculative eye»; and so sees in the cild, ever more clearly, the reincarnation of the mother –Here is the same, sexually

28) Cf. Cixous's analysis of the figure of Ligeia, who similarly exercises intellectual domination over her husband. For Cixous, Ligeia becomes «masculinised» by this process (see esp. pp. 311 and 318).

29) Woolf, p. 52.

30) Cf. Bonaparte: «the forbidden, «accursed» lore –doubtless sexual knowledge» (p. 222); and see Zanger, pp. 535-7.

31) See Freud (1905): «The instinct for knowledge in children is attracted unexpectedly early and intensively to sexual problems and is in fact possibly first aroused by them» (pp. 112-3; passage added 1915).

32) Cf. Zanger, p. 539, for the sexual symbolism of the «abyss».

charged, «bewildering meaning» in her eyes. These «suspicions, of a nature fearful and exciting» increase and become «hourly.. more hideously terrible en their aspect». This sense of terror (which is yet at the same time «exciting») can be explained as deriving, not from any literal reincarnation, but from the narrator's revulsion (tinged with fascination) at the **emergence of sexuality** in the child[33]. Admittedly, she is only 10 but if this growth seems over-precocious and the narrator is imagining sexual maturity where it does not exist, such a fantasy would itself be revelatory of his unconscious obsessions. The sexuality he feared in the mother returns, whether objectively or in his imagination, in the child.

Meanwhile he attempts to **control** his daughter, shutting her off from the «scrutiny of the world», in «rigid seclusion»[34]. But her sexuality cannot so easily be controlled. The girl remains unnamed, while the dead mother's name is never pronounced: «Morella's name died with her at her death. Of the mother I had never spoken to the daughter –it was impossible to speak». The taboo on Morella's name implies that to name her would be to name the unnameable– to signify female sexuality, the knowledge of which he disavows in himself and wishes to withhold from his daughter. Yet at the baptismal ceremony, delayed until her tenth year, he names the child –Morella, acting under a process of unconscious compulsion, unable completely to repress his knowledge of female sexuality: «What fiend spoke from the recesses of my soul, when... I whispered... the syllables– Morella?. The child cries out: «I am here!», falls prostrate and dies. The father buries her in the family vault and –«laughed with a long and bitter laugh as I found no traces of the

33) Cf. Bonaparte: «At ten, she is already a grown woman, the physical counterpart of her mother» (p. 220); and see Zanger, p. 542.

34) Cf. «Rappaccini's Daughter», where Rappaccini similarly secludes his daughter –although with full and conscious awareness of her sexuality.

first, in the charnel where I laid the second– Morella».

The absence of the mother's body need not be taken as indicating reincarnation; it may be a negative hallucination, given the narrator's increasing withdrawal from the external world. Rather, it may be claimed that what is «reincarnated» in the child es not Morella herself, but **her sexuality**. For this reason, perhaps, the text obliges the child to die at 10, at the moment of her (somewhat precocious) sexual awakening; as Dickens, in «The Old Curiosity Shop» (1841), kills off the «pure» Little Nell at, or just over, the threshold of puberty[35]. Female sexuality is thus both **signified,** in the naming of the mother, and **«punished»**, in the death of the daughter; her annihilation corresponds to Berenice's mutilation, as a restoration of «cultural order».

In «Berenice», the woman, passive till the climax but seen by the man as potentially destructive, finally becomes at least defensively active. In «Morella», the mother, active in life, dies, to «re-live» in a potentially active daughter, who herself dies. Activity and passivity (the latter signified by mutilation and death) thus alternate in the texts construction of femaleness. In several other tales, a similar active passive dialectic is evident. In «Ligeia» (1838), the woman, like Morella intellectually active and dominant[36], is quite clearly sexually active too, and produces an erotic obsession in her husband. She dies, but «returns» to repossess the body of Rowena, her passive replacement. In «The Fall of the House of Usher» (1839), Usher's sister Madeline, passive and silent in life, «returns» from the grave to provoke the death of her brother, who almost certainly harboured repressed incestuous desire for her. Finally,

35) Nell is killed off at 14 («She... would be a woman soon» (505); her premature death preserves her status as «pure as the newly-fallen snow» (p. 658).

36) «Ligeia» and «Morella» exhibit numerous lexical and thematic parallels.

in «The Oval Portrait» (1842), a painter's wife, effectively killed by her husband's negligence and indifference, takes revenge on men from the grave, terrorising the male narrator through her portrait.

All these texts can be read as repeating the same underlying structure, in diverse manifest forms; beneath all, analysis can discern in operation the repressed male **Knowledge and fear** of active female sexualit. This, then, for these texts would be the repressed material that, according to Freud in this essay on «The Uncanny» (1919), underlies the literature of terror: «What is concerned is an actual repression of some definite material and a return of this repressed material»[37]. It may be argued that the structure thus disinterred is monotonous, reducing the texts to simulacra of each other. Indeed, psychoanalytic criticism has tended to identify in Poe's tales the repetition of certain basic patterns Thus Bonaparte finds the persistent traces of sado-masochism, necrophilia and an Oedipal mother-fixation[38]; Lanati detects the repeated process: «loss of body» –failed search for another body in the Other– total collapse into schizophrenia[39]; Cixous, closest to the present reading, identifies the structure: woman dominates man –dies–returns to confirm domination[40]. These various structures are not incompatible, but taken together would convert the texts into hyper-repetitive products. However, on the basis of the readings advanced here, it may be argued that the repeated themes in the texts derive from cultural stereotypes (sex-roles) implanted in the subject's unconscious by an oppressive and repressive culture; and that to analyse the operation of those stereotypes and their partial, if temporary,

37) Freud (1919), p. 403.
38) Bonaparte, e.g. pp.222-3, 679
39) Lanati, e.g. pp. 52, 56.
40) Cixous, pp. 322-4.

breakdown in Poe's texts may be politically educative. If we still live in a largely patriarchal society. Poe's repetitive texts may still bear repeated examination.

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LOVE IN
BLACK AND WHITE

A chronologial loot at the novels of
four XXth Century Black American Women.

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Perhaps one of the touchiest side-effects of racism in The United States, even 120 years after the abolition of the peculiar institution, has been a constant hostility toward any sexual relationship between members of opposite races. Historical reality looms over any attempt to breach the white/black dividing line, and emotional response colors any intelectual reasoning on the subject. Perhaps this is till inevitable.For too many years the violation of Black women was considered a white man's prerogative and a part of the emasculation of the slave who saw himself rendered impotent in the protection of this own wife or daughter. The white man's venture into sexual relations with a black woman was rape on two levels –physical and psychological–. Perhaps in retaliation, the myth grew that the greatest desire of every black man was to sleep with a white woman. Ideas of a very credible desire for revenge coupled with exaggerated (?) tales of the black man's vibrant sexual vitality were propagated to strike terror in the hearts of all Southern (and most Northern) white households at the very mention of any interracial liason[1]. In such a climate, any healthy sexual

1) Indeed, Governor George Wallace, for one, played on this very real fear just 20 years ago in his fight against school integration in Alabama.

relationship between races has been rendered all but impossible. Legal impediments may now have been removed but social stigma persistently attaches itself to any violation of the accepted norm.

These circumstances have understandably influenced the treatment of the love theme in the literary arts to a great extent. Even with the very definite rise of the ethnic romance for widespread audiences[2] «interracial love is the **last** taboo»[3]. Light fiction is there to entertain, «to provide a temporary escape from the gloom and doom of real life», not to threaten, and very definitely not to bring the ghouls howling forth out of the dark corners of the reader's mind. Small wonder, then, that biracial love in American literature has been treated almost entirely by the serious novelist and only as part of the overall portrayal of an all-encompassing social phenomenon.

For the purposes of the present paper I should like to trace the chronological changes in the social climate reflected in the relationships between fictional characters compelled to brave social ostracism for the sake of their love. Four Black American women novelists have effectively interwoven interracial romance into their stories, tracing the subtleties of motive and emotional reaction against the changing mood of the country: Nella Larsen in **Quicksand,** written in 1928; Ann Petry in **The Narrows,** 1953; Ann Fairbairn in **Five Smooth Stones,** 1966; and Alice Walker in **Meridian,** published in 1976. Each novel represents a different era in the painful development of race relations in the U.S.: Helga Crane moves through the uplift of the Harlem Renaissance to the «raceless» society of Denmark; Link Williams labors to resolve the contradictory perceptions of the American Negro in the long passive acceptance of the status

2) Sales of romance fiction were estimated to be about 25% of all massmarket paperback sales and at least one quarter of this market is made up of black women. See **Black Enterprise**, Decembrer 1982, Vol. 12 N° 5, «Love for Sale», by Rosemary L. Bray. p. 73.

3) Bray, p. 76.

quo of the incipient struggle for voter rights and the privileges of American citizenship; while Truman Held is a product of the post-assassination trama, which turned the movement bitter and Black. The quality of the love relationship entered into by these black young people, although colored by individual personality, emmanates from a distinctly collective psyche –the insecurity of the black population en masse as mirrored in the particular politics of each era.

Helga Crane, of Nella Larsen's **Quicksand**, is herself a product of miscegenation –a black father who early abandones her mother, and a Danish mother who unfortunately dies relatively young, leaving her mulatto daughter defenseless, disoriented and unwanted as a child. As a young woman she flees her position at a Southern Negro school designed to bleach the Negro culture (much as Ralph Ellison's «Invisible Man») to the cultural heyday of New York's Harlem, only to run head-long into the contradictions of the age. Her new-found Negro intellectual friends loudly proclaim the «New Negro», advocate «social equality» and «equal opportunity for all», but harbor a hatred for whites so intense that it is considered an affront for any Negro to receive any of them on equal terms. Yet these same fashionable intellectuals ape the white's clothes, their manners, their gracious ways of living and are faintly contemptuous of the culture and ways of their own people. A light mulatto woman is looked down upon for the audacity to mix with whites, going even so far as to give mixed parties where the white men dance with the colored women, which, according to Helga's friends, «can mean only one thing».[4]

The impossibility of personal commitment without the ugly insinuations of race repulses Helga, who again flees –this time to her mothers sister in Denmark. The very limited

4) Nella Larsen, **Quicksand** (New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969), p. 135. Hereafter, page numbers in parenthesis will refer to the novel in question.

number of Blacks in this country means that Helga is regarded much more as an object of curiosity than as a threat, and the constant flattery and attention cause her to turn her back mentally on her native country. She indulges in several flirts with Danes and seriously attracks the rather Bohemian artist Axel Olsen who wishes to put her exotic beauty into oleo. Pressured by her relatives on the subject of matrimony, Helga responds that she does not believe in mixed marriages as «they brought only trouble –to the children– as she herself knew but too well from bitter experience» (p. 172). Helga's rejection of the idea of marriage «between the races» is explained by her American racist upbringing by which any drop of Negro blood was enough to label a person Negro, and consequently second-class. But Helga is evading the real question since she herself is half-Danish and moving in the Danish society. When Olsen declares himself to be madly in love with her, after a hint at an illicit relationship which Helga ignores, and proposes marriage as a «reward» for her propriety, she refuses saying, «But you see, Herr Olsen, I'm not for sale. Not to you. Not to any white man. I don't care at all to be owned. Even by you» (p. 195). Helga properly understands his passion as misplaced, a passion for the exotic, the artistic expression rather than the person she embodies. Olsen has insisted that she will be his touchstone, the instigator of his future greatness as an artist. But, indeed, Olsen's portrait of Helga reflects his true feelings toward her much more than his words: «...it was, she felt, a picture of a disgusting, sensual creature with her features»– but not of herself. One is reminded of the concept of the White Negro who accepts the real Negro «not as a human being in his totality, but as the bringer of a highly specified and restricted 'cultural dowery', to use (Norman) Mailer's phrase»[5].

5) Ned Polsky, «Reflections on Hip» in **Advertisements for Myself**, by Norman Mailer (London: Panther Books Ltd., 1972), p. 299

But there is another reason, a racial reason. Helga cannot marry a white man out of fear –«We can't tell, you know; if we were married, you might come to be ashamed of me, to hate me, to hate all dark people. My mother did that». (p. 196). Helga is offered in place in a white society which prides itself on its lack of racism. But happiness eludes her, and as a desire for the love and laughter of her own people wells up inside, she turns her eyes homeward to America.

The Narrows by Ann Petry, written in 1953, while centering itself on the tragedy of a specific interracial love affair, is in effect a close scrutiny on the Negro situation during the pre-civil rights era. As its title indicates, the novel is not about the life of Link Williams, but about the people who comprise his neighborhood, and by extension, the situation of Negroes in the U.S. at large. Although the novel unfolds in Monmouth, Connecticut, far north of the Mason-Dixon line, the social ostracism of and complete lack of empathy with Black people is the order of the day.

Link's education takes place on two conflicting fronts: his kindly but uncomprehending foster mother, Abbie Crunch, schools him in proper manners, academic achievements and what «coloreds» should and should not do, making him feel as if he were ever carrying the responsibility for «The Negro Race» on his shoulders. She is fond of reminding him that in the United States he can go as far as he wants, but reveals her ambivalent feelings about her own race when Link confides to her that he wants to be an historian: «But whoever heard of a Negro historian?» On the other hand, Bill Hod, proprietor of «The Last Chance» saloon just across the street, carefully, sometimes brutally, nurtures Link's pride in his black skin.

Camilo Treadway stumbles across Link's path accidentally, while fleeing from an unknown pursuer in the thick fog along the River Wye. Terrified, she clings to Link's strong arms, a bastion of safety in a sea of clouds. Only later does she realize he is Black — and the fear of the unseen creature in the fog is

replaced by fear of rape by a black man. Link senses this and disgustedly leaves her. But intellect overtakes emotion as Camilo seeks him out two weeks later, explaining that she had reproached herself for her own first reaction. If this dark man was good enough for her to receive his protection –and desperately at that– then she has been unfair to reject him as a stereotype. Thereafter ensues a passionate romance which has Link thinking of a stable relationship including marriage and children. Although he is aware from the beginning that she has not told him her real surname, and that she is obviously from a very wealthy family, he chooses to ignore the implications, which seem unimportant to him in light of the very tender love that unites them.

People from the Narrows who know of the relationship are wary (white women can only mean trouble); Abbie, on discovering Camilo one night, throws her out of the house; and Bill Hod makes sure that Link sees a year-old newspaper containing an article on Camilo Treadway, her husband Bunny, and the importance of the Treadway munitions factory to the town of Monmouth. Link, understandably feels he has been used, and reverts to a «slave mentality» which only allows him to see himself as a new plaything for the white mistress. He calls off the relationship refusing even to listen to Camilo's explanation. Even though she persists in keeping their midnight rendevous in the Narrow. Link finally makes her understand that his attitude is final. Emotions take over. Link must pay for the harm he has caused her. In a fit of fury, Camilo rents her clothing and screams, expecting Link to be arrested on charges of attempted rape.

The circumstancial evidence is flimsy at best and even the judge postpones a trial indefinitely. Watching Camilo's psychological deterioration, her mother and husband decide to take things in their own hands. They expect only to exact a confession at gunpoint of Link's dishonorable intentions, but when confronted with the truth –«We were in love»– Bunny

fires the gun in his hand. But this tragedy is not just a personal one; everybody has had a part in it. For in the words of one black housekeeper, «It were everybody's fault... It were purely like a snowball and everybody give it a push». (p. 415).

Ann Fairbairn reviews the whole of the race situation in the South, together with the hope the Civil Rights Movement brings, in her one long novel. **Five Smooth Stones,** published in 1966. Named for his great –grandfather, who was burned alive in Mississippi on trumped-up charges of rape, David Champlin is reared in New Orleans by his loving grandfather and tutored by the Danish professor Bjarne Knudsen who calls him «the son of my mind»[6]. A good mind and good connections win David a scholarship to a Northern college, which is theroretically liberal and integrated though both these qualitites are at best superficial. One of Lil Joe's last admonitions to his grandson is not to get involved with any white girls –there's only sorrow to be had. But David meets Sara on his first trip to Pengard and the mutual attraction is immediate and almost irresistible. David resists –as if his very life depended on it, and after three years it is Sara who finally confronts him with the fact that «We're in love». Even so, David sees no real future in the affair because, as he says, «the sorrow isn't just for the interracial couple. It spreads, like poison, to everyone involved, whatever color—» (p. 444) David fears that the problems an interracial couple have to face might wear down Sara's love for him. The possibility that Sara might come to hate him because of his race is more painful to him that breaking off the relationship while they still can. David goes on to study law at Harvard while Sara busies herself as an artist in Europe — this time it is the rational intellect refusing to let love grow while the emotions clamor to

6) It is interesting to note that once again a black author has chosen a Dane to be the «good», «colorblind» white.

let the heart lead the way[7].

The solution to Sara and David's love affair is opened to them when David is offered a position with the State Department in an African country. Sara is crushed when, at the death of his grandfather, David calls off the marriage to work in the Civil Rights Movement. Not until he is seriously wounded by white racists does David finally admit that for them an imperfect marriage is better than the loneliness that unfulfilled love has brought them both — almost 15 years have passed since they first met. He sees this marriage as imperfect because he can never take his wife home with him, and they both concede that there will always be areas of misunderstanding that even their love cannot traverse. David is opposed to having children –Sara is delighted to find herself pregnant; he says he hopes it will be a girl because he feels mulatto women have a better chance at a normal life– Sara wants a son to be just like the husband she adores. And as happens in most cases, it is the tiny new David Champlin who finally overshadows his father's reservations. Their happiness is short-lived, however, and the resolve to overcome the problems is never really put to the test. Three days after his son is born, David is shot in Cainsville, Mississippi.

Thus, the problems of biracial love presented in this novel are left essentially unresolved. The problems, the «areas», as David called them, in which the two could not meet in any sympathetic understanding had only surfaced briefly in the short time they were married. Champlin's very real fear that

7) There are two other interracial marriages mentioned in the story. David's associate in law, Brad Willis, is also married to a mulatto woman, whose white mother and black father were involved in a suicide-murder affair while she was passing at a white college. Unable to resolve her feelings of guilt at having denied her beloved father, Peg resorts to alcohol. In contrast, Hunter Travis, a schoolmate, is the light mulatto son of a Black diplomat and white mother. The marriage apparently works well because they move in social circles outside the U.S.

racial prejudice could eventually disrupt even the most profound love never had a chance to be proved either way.

The love relationship in **Meridian,** by Alice Walker, portrays part of what happened to the Civil Rights Movement after the assassination of several of its principals and the disillusionment brought on by the realization that to pass laws was one thing, but to change the hearts and minds of people quite another. Truman Held, at the beginning of his involvement in the Movement, decides that if he is dating white girls it must be for sex, while for Lynne Rabinowitz, a jewish girl from New York, «the black people of the South were Art. This she begged forgiveness for and tried to hide but it was no use». (128) To participate fully in the Movement, Lynne must overcome the deference of the local black men who were wary of her to the point of fright. «Why should the be afraid of her? She was just a woman. Only they could not see her that way. To them she was a route to death pure and simple. (p. 135) Her unpretentious ways, hard work, and gentle kindness eventually convince the blacks of her sincerity and win Truman's love as well. For her part, she is prepared to give up everything for her love and, in fact, her parents disown her after her marriage to Truman.

As the Civil Rights Movement turned bitter, however, Truman finds his feelings for Lynne changing, though he is hard put to analyze exactly how. It is their mutual friend Tommy Odds who, on losing his forearm in an attack by white racists, accuses Lynne of the ultimate sin against Black people: «...Lynne guilty? That she is white is true. That she is therefore a killer, evil, a mother-fucker —how true? Not true at all! And yet –...So Lynne was guilty on two counts, of being with them, and of being period. At least that was how Tommy Odds saw it. And who was he to argue, guilty as he was of loving the white bitch who caused his friend to lose his arm? (p. 130).

Little by little, Lynne, as a white, is excluded from the marches, no longer welcome at the meetings, no longer allowed

to write articles, and Truman is under an unspoken pressure. It is assumed that he will say nothing of what goes on at the meetings to his wife. Now, even when Tommy Odds takes the ultimate revenge and rapes Lynne, Truman's feelings of anger and insult are tempered by his ambivalent attitude toward his white wife. In spite of the birth of their daughter, separation is inevitable. Truman wants to return to Meridian, the black protagonist of the novel and a mutual friend. Later Lynne accuses him of «running off as black became beautiful». (p. 149). Lynne's life is ruined; she turns to alcohol and pills. Even when her daughter is attacked and killed on the streets, she refuses to go home to her parents: «Camara wasn't just some little black kid that got ripped off on the street. She was my **child.** I'd have to walk over my child's **grave** to go back and I won't» (p. 179). The denouement of this white-black love relationship leaves little room for hope. Truman had had a premonition even before marrying the white girl he loved: «a sinking, hopeless feeling about opposites and what they do to each other». (p. 124)[8].

In spite of the chronological and therefore, circumstancial differences pointed out in these four love affairs, certain parallels may be seen also. First, it may be noticed that in no case is the white member of the relationship from the South where social education would never let such an acquaintance even pretend to surface. Secondly, even the more liberal Northerners of both races are adamantly opposed to an interracial liason in their own family. Thirdly, it is interesting to note that all four of the whites who dare to love a Black are

8) The author's own interracial marriage to Mel Leventhal, a civil rights Lawyer, ended in divorce. In her book of poetry, **Revolutionary Petunias**, «she writes with sadness and defiance of the price she had paid for loving and marrying a white man». Lavid Bradly, «Novelist Alice Walker: Telling the Black Woman's Story», **The New York Times Magazine,** Janyary 8, 1984.

artists in some way or another (Olsen Axel paints, Camilo Treadway is in the fashion business, Sara Hunt is an artist, and Lynne Rabinowitz is a dancer) and society often considers its artistically inclined members as living more or less on the fringes of the accepted norm. Fourthly, it is the white who insists on carrying on the affair while the Blacks are reticent and insecure, unsure of really participating as equals rather than being manipulated once again by white supremacy. And lastly, it is, in the final analysis, the social circumstances which interfere with the mutual love and respect of two people who happen to belong to different races. It is indeed the society itself which continues to veto love between Black an White. Interracial love is still today the last taboo.

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